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ABSTRACT

This speech summarizes the recommendations of seven National Governors' Association task forces represented in "Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education," highlighting the physical facilities group's concerns. The Task Force on Teaching confronted work force quantity and quality issues and recommended strategies for attracting and retaining competent teachers. The Task Force on Leadership and Management concluded that positive reforms will be brought about by effective administrators in reorganized schools. The Parent Involvement and Choice Task Force recommended that parents and teachers cooperate to set local goals and identify school differences. The Task Force on Readiness, concerned with the intolerable economic and social costs of undereducation, recommended that schools accept responsibility for preparing at-risk children for academic success by involving community agencies and parents. The Task Force on Technology stressed the need for careful planning and support for local experimentation. The Task Force on College Quality focused on the need to assess student performance. The school facilities task force recommended more efficient use of buildings, greater use of school property for general community use, active involvement of states in building restoration, adoption of policies for disposition of old facilities, and the development of greater expertise by national education organizations in alternative school use and design. After a general discussion of these recommendations, the speech expresses concern for the vitality of rural communities, in which school construction may be the most significant capital investment for decades at a time. (MLH)

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REMARKS OF GOVERNOR TED SCHWINDEN TO THE 64TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITY PLANNERS IN EDMONTON, ALBERTA ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1987 AT 10:15 A.M.

Good morning, and thank you for the invitation to participate in your opening ceremonies. Having spent most of my life within shouting distance of the International Boundary, I am especially happy to be enjoying the warm Canadian hospitality you traditionally offer. And having spent a good portion of my time in the past two years as Chairman of the National Governors' Association Task Force on School Facility Use, I'm pleased to be meeting with the very people who will be making use of our findings and recommendations.

Time for Results: The Governors' 1991 Report on Education was an unusual document when it was published, and remains so even now. Unlike our association's formal positions on state and federal issues, Time for Results was not debated and voted on. That offered the opportunity for the members of each of seven separate task forces to present the best ideas they could without worrying about "watering them down" to achieve political consensus.

The document remains unusual--for us-- in that it continues to command our attention and energy as a project that asks five years of commitment, rather than the typical one-year emphasis given to the association theme chosen by each chairman during his one-year term.

On behalf of the National Governors' Association, I wish to thank you for continued interest in our findings by making the report a focus of your conference. Your action lends credence to our contention that the report was not intended for a dusty shelf, but

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rather as a spur to ongoing debate and evaluation of several topics in modern educational practice.

As requested by your conference chairman, I will touch on the major recommendations--briefly-- of each of the task forces, reserving for somewhat more attention the work of the task force on School Facility Use. Following that, and disregarding my usual reluctance to make predictions, I will offer a thought or two about a particular view of the future that might depend mightily on educational facility planning.

When Governor Lamar Alexander of Tennessee assumed the Chairmanship of the National Governors' Association, he asked each Governor to serve on a task force that would ask tough questions about education, and report back possible answers that represented top-notch professional thinking, citizens' concerns, and the best judgment of the governors themselves.

Frankly, the best way for me to insure that you would be exposed to the major implications of our work as they affect your professional concerns might be to stop right here for ten minutes and ask you to read the article by Yale Stenzler in your March-April issue of the CEFP Journal. Mr. Stenzler testified before our task force and is cited in our final report. His review of the facility implications of each task forces's recommendations is thorough and enlightening, and I commend it to you.

With that resource available to you, I will touch only lightly on the work of the six task forces that did not directly address facility use.

The Task Force on Teaching confronted the need for both quantity and quality in the public school work force, and basically asked the question "What can we do to attract and keep able teachers?" The task force offered a ten-fold answer, the most important parts of which, in my opinion, were

-- creation of a national board to define teacher standards,
-- redesign of the organization of schools to create more productive working and learning environments,
-- improvements of the structure of the teaching career and its compensation,
-- improving teacher mobility, and
-- alignment of teacher incentives with schoolwide student performance.

The Task force on Leadership and Management concluded that positive change in the midst of calls for reform will largely be brought about by effective administrators of individual schools. Reorganization of schools themselves so community goals for education can be met will be necessary. Better training, incentives and rewards should all be instituted to insure the emergence of effective principals prepared to make the best use of the time and resources committed by the public to each school building.

Parent Involvement and Choice was the subject of the third task force's inquiry. The governors in that group noted the irony of America being characterized as a land of choices, with parents having in fact so little choice in the public schooling offered their children.

A contention that choice among schools is a desired option carries the necessary implication that individual schools are, or should be, different. Involving parents and teachers in setting local goals that might differ from building to building is recommended as a means for increasing excellence.

The Task force on Readiness took Harvard President Derek Bok's admonition "If you think education is expensive, try ignorance!" a step further and asked 'What is the cost of undereducation?' Concluding that those costs were intolerable--both economically and socially-- the task force recommended that schools accept responsibility for better preparing at-risk children for academic success, involving both community agencies and their parents.

The fact that, in the past, millions of dollars have been spent to purchase machines for schools, many of which were subsequently discarded, led the Task Force on Technology to emphasize the need to plan carefully for the use of any particular technology well before purchasing it. In recognition of the lack of consensus among educators on the best use of technology, the governors stressed support for local experimentation, with commitment to reward successes, particularly with students from low-income families.

The sixth of the seven task forces looked into college quality. At the risk of oversimplification, they found that college quality is impossible to measure in any way the public has a right to have it measured. Their recommendations focused on the need for assessment of student performance, with incentives that would include funding formulas.

As I mentioned at the outset, I would like to comment more fully on the recommendations of the last task force, the one I chaired on School Facility Use.

Our Task Force offered recommendations encouraging more efficient use of buildings for educating students, greater use of school property for general community use, active involvement of states in restoring buildings to safety and good repair, adoption of policies for the disposition of old facilities, and the development of greater expertise by national education organizations in alternative school use and design.

The one obstacle we foresaw common to these recommendations is the simple response to new ideas offered by the character Tevye in "Fiddler on the Roof"--tradition!

Ask why schools are closed for as many days of the year as they are open and the answer is "We've always done it that way."

Ask why sports facilities, kitchens, even classrooms are not available to community groups and the answer is--"We've never done it before."

Ask why unused buildings are boarded up and decaying and the answer is some variation of the same theme--"Tradition."

Obviously there are bright spots. The Task Force heard many examples of innovative facility use and efficient property management. But to the extent that tradition is an obstacle to new approaches, Governors and facility planners can have a positive influence on the ways communities choose to use the vast investment they have in school facilities. We can promote non-traditional ideas, applaud

innovative local actions, and lead state government away from restrictions and prohibitions imposed by tradition.

We can motivate community leaders by asking one simple question: "Your taxes paid for these buildings--don't you want to use them?"

The range of complementary and alternative uses of facilities is broad, covering all ages and a wide variety of recreational, educational and governmental programs. Our report stressed one particularly appropriate use, however: day care and after-school programs for young children. The demand for high quality day care typically exceeds supply, and schools are uniquely designed to provide good care. On-premises day care can be an attractive benefit for teachers and staff, and might also encourage teenage mothers to complete school.

Whatever traditional use meets the approval of local community, making better use of existing structures -- and properly designing new ones -- ought to be a welcome alternative to raising extra revenue to provide services in separate locations.

We estimated that the value of existing school buildings in the United States is in the neighborhood of $250 billion. We asked in the report whether the inevitable investment of a similar amount as buildings age and populations change ought to duplicate what we've traditionally provided or produce something better. The question is an open one. Communities and school officials will deal most directly with the answers, but all of us can foster an environment conducive to change.

In concluding this review of the Governors' report, I would be

remiss if I didn't stress Chairman Alexander's main challenge to education. Common to all the task force reports is an emphasis on experimentation and assessment of performance-- teacher performance, student performance, school performance. The Governors recognize that we don't necessarily have the answers, but we want to encourage those who might. As Lamar likes to put it, we're ready to regulate less, if schools and school districts will produce better results. Ideas are plentiful, and now it is, indeed, time for results.

Let me conclude my part on your program today, as promised, with a brief glimpse of what I might forsee as a significant role you can have in the future.

My concern is for the vitality of rural communities. I should tell you that that concern is born of an upbringing in a very small place-- my introduction to formal education was eight years in a one-room schoolhouse. It is also born of my work on the school facility use task force. And it may be especially appropriate to relate it to you here today, Montana and Alberta representing-- as do our nations that share the North American continent-- vast distances with scattered population centers.

The near-disappearance of passenger trains has made depot-building a dubious occupational choice for young people. Giant shopping centers and chain-store marketing have basically ended the prospect of new department stores-- even hardware stores-- in small towns. An understandable demand for the very best in health care has led to a concentration of medical services in larger cities, making it unlikely that rural hospital construction will ever again be

widespread. And if local governments elsewhere in our neighboring countries suffer the same funding constraints as ours in Montana, elegant and imposing courthouses may well be preserved, but are unlikely to be duplicated.

I conclude that of the many economic and social institutions that have served as activity centers for rural communities, in the future, the only two that still have a chance of enhancing and nurturing small town life are churches and schools. Others will decide for the churches, but many of us here today will influence what schools will be like.

If, as I do, some of you value the option that rural life offers in our pluralistic societies, I hope you will put your imaginations and talents to work on the problem. A new school building may well be the major--if not the only-- capital investment many small communities make for decades at a time. Local officials who want those buildings to provide a good learning environment for children but also offer attractions to the community as a whole will need your help in figuring out how to do so. Those of you who want to provide that same combination may have to convince other local officials that it can be done.

Together, you may be a means for preserving a way of life that has been an essential part of the character of our nation.

Thank you for your interest and attention. Best wishes for a successful conference.